SCRIPTURE
AND
TRADITION
COMPARED;
IN A
SERMON
Preached at
Guild-Hall Chapel,
Novemb. 27. 1687.

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THE PREFACE.

I *Intend, God willing, to publiſh in a little time, a full Anſwer to* J.S. *his* Catholick Letters, *ſo far as I am concerned in them. In the mean while, I thought it not unfit to Print this Sermon I lately Preached, that I might give a General View of* Scripture *and* Tradition, *as to the Way of conveying Matters of Faith, before I come to the particular Debate with* J. S. *Wherein I do not doubt, but I ſhall be able to ſhew that we have very good Grounds for the Certainty of our Faith, and that they have none either as to* Faith *or* Tradition, *as to the main Points in Controverſie between us.*

Coloſſ. 2. 6.

As ye have therefore received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, ſo walk ye in him.

THere are two things obſervable in the manner of St. *Pauls* expreſſing himſelf to the *Coloſſians* in this *Epiſtle.*

1. That he had a very good opinion of them at preſent, as appears by the foregoing verſe. *For though I be abſent in the Fleſh, yet am I with you in the Spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the ſtedfaſtneſs of your Faith in Chriſt.*

What could be ſaid more to the Advantage and Honour of a Chriſtian Church? For *Order* is the Strength and Beauty of any Society, uniting the ſeveral Parts to each other, and thereby preſerving and adorning the whole Body. And the more there is of this in any Chriſtian Church, the more it reſembles the Body of Chriſt, and the greater Honour it brings to the Chriſtian Profeſſion. Eſpecially, when it is joyned with a *ſtedfaſtneſs of Faith in Chriſt*, i. e. with a firm and well ſettled Reſolution to adhere to that Faith which Chriſt himſelf delivered. For the true Faith of Chriſt is not only the Mark which diſtinguiſhes, but the Soul which enlivens the Body of the Church, and by its Vigour and Influence makes the ſeveral parts of it become the living Members of Chriſts Body.

But if all this were ſeen by St. *Paul* in the Church of the *Coloſſians*, what need he to write ſo warmly and earneſtly.

neſtly as he doth to them? Muſt we think, as ſome do, that he uſes theſe Expreſſions as gentle *Methods* of *Inſinuation*, and commends them for that, which he would perſwade them to? But this doth not ſeem agreeable to
2 Cor. 1:12. the Apoſtles *ſimplicity and godly ſincerity*, which he elſewhere ſets ſuch a value upon. But it is far more probable that hitherto they had been very *orderly* aud *ſtedfaſt*: but *Epaphras* going to St. *Paul* had informed him throughly of their condition, *viz.* That they were like a Garriſon cloſely beſieged on all ſides; and although hitherto they had held out with great Courage, yet he did not know what earneſt Sollicitations, and fair Promiſes, and tempting Motives might do with them, and therefore the Apoſtle writes this Epiſtle to encourage them in their *ſtedfaſtneſs*, and to warn them againſt Temptations. Which he doth in ſuch a manner, as ſhews,

2. That he had a more than ordinary Apprehenſion of the danger they were in. *And this I ſay*, ſaith he, *leſt any man ſhould beguile you with enticing words*, v. 4. *and beware leſt any man ſpoil you with Philoſophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the World, and not after Chriſt*, v. 8. *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worſhipping of Angels*, &c. v. 18. All which expreſſions do imply, that he had juſt reaſon to fear and to give them caution in time, that while they did yet *think that they ſtood, they ſhould take heed leſt they fall.*

And this is that which the Apoſtle aims at in the words of the Text; *As ye have therefore received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, ſo walk ye in him,*

Receiving Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, doth not here relate to his *Perſon*, but to his *Authority*, and to his *Doctrine*; ſo the Apoſtle himſelf explains it in the next verſe, *rooted and built up in him, and eſtabliſhed in the Faith, as ye have been taught.* *Walking*

Walking in him is an Eastern way of speaking and supposes both an adhering to that Faith they had then received, and living according to it, looking on Christ and his Doctrine, as their *only way* to Heaven.

And as ye had received him, so walk ye in him, implies that the manner of their receiving Christ and his Doctrine at first was different from that which the false Apostles endeavoured to bring in among them, and that they were bound to keep close to that pure and Primitive Doctrine which they at *first* received.

From hence we may consider a double Obligation lying upon them.

1. *To keep stedfast to that Faith which they first received*, without being seduced from it by the Arts of Deceivers, who were then busie among them.

2. *To live according to it*, by making that *Faith* the Principle of a Christian Life; and so *walking in him, as they have received him.*

1. As to the former, the Reasonableness of it cannot but appear from the supposition here made, *viz. that they had received Christ Jesus the Lord.*

For, thereby they declared, that *they received him as the Christ, i. e.* as him who was anointed of the Father to Teach and Instruct his Church; and therefore they were bound to adhere to his Doctrine; there being no other, whom *the Father hath sealed* and appointed to declare his Will; and *in him were hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.* Col. 2. 3.

They received him *as Christ Jesus*, that is, they *hoped for Redemption through his Blood, even the forgiveness of sins.* Col. 1. 14. And if their hopes of Heaven depended upon his Mediation, they had the greatest Reason to adhere only to him.

They received him *as Christ Jesus the Lord*, and therefore they ought to submit to his Authority, to obey his

his Commands, and to obſerve his Inſtitutions, and in all Circumſtances of Life to keep ſtedfaſt to the Doctrine which he delivered.

But here ariſes the great Difficulty, how they ſhould know by any Certain Rule, what was the true and genuine Doctrine of Chriſt, which himſelf delivered? For,

1. The falſe Teachers among them pretended to deliver the true Doctrine of Chriſt as well as the Apoſtles.

2. That which they at firſt received was no certain Rule. For the falſe Teachers might have been before them. And firſt Poſſeſſion gives no Title in Religion.

3. The *Apoſtle* doth not put the whole Tryal meerly upon their Judgments or Memories, or Capacities; *viz.* What they thought, or remembred was at firſt taught them for the Doctrine of Chriſt.

For, it was very poſſible for them to have miſtaken, or to have miſ-remembred, what was at firſt delivered.

Nothing can be more weak than to imagine that the Judgments of People in matters of Faith, muſt be formed according to the skill and excellency of their Teachers. For the hearers of Chriſt himſelf; *although he ſpake as never Man ſpake*, yet did very often miſtake his meaning. And at one time ſo remarkably, that although he took care to rectifie their miſapprehenſion, yet it is ſaid, *From that time many of his Diſciples went back and walked no more with him.* So that the higheſt infallibility in the Teachers, doth not prevent the poſſibility, or the danger of miſtaking in the hearers. And whatſoever any vainly pretend, nothing can do it, but *Tranſfuſing* the *Spirit* of *Infallibility* into all.

Joh. 6.66.

If we look over the *Apoſtolical Churches* while they were under the Care and Conduct of an *Infallible Spirit*; yet this did not prevent their running into great errours and miſtakes, as appears by the Account we have of them, given by that Spirit which cannot deceive in the Apoſtolical Writings.

In

In the Church of *Rome* it ſelf, even at that time, when *its Faith was ſpoken of throughout the World*, yet there were diſſenſions and differences there, and ſuch as were *contrary to the Doctrine* which was delivered. And St. *Paul* bids them *to mark ſuch which cauſed them*; he doth not ſay, it was impoſſible for them to introduce any thing *contrary to the Doctrine* which they had learned by *Tradition* from the Apoſtles; but he not only ſuppoſes it very poſſible, but he bids them have a particular Eye to them, leſt they ſhould be deceived by them. Rom. 1. 8. 16. 17.

The Church of *Corinth* was *planted by* Paul, *and watered by* Apollos; and there were Diſciples of *Cephas and of Chriſt himſelf*. And yet in the midſt of ſo many Infallible Teachers, they had like to have loſt all their Faith; as one of them tells them. *How ſay ſome among you there is no Reſurrection of the dead? And if Chriſt be not riſen, then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith is alſo vain.* Could not they remember to day what was taught them yeſterday, and ſo what the Apoſtles at firſt preached to them? 1 Cor. 15. 12. 14.

The Churches of *Galatia* had ſuch an opinion of St. *Paul*, upon his firſt preaching the Goſpel among them, *that they received him as an Angel of God, even as Chriſt Jeſus*; yet preſently after he ſaith, *am I therefore become your Enemy becauſe I tell you the Truth*? What! *Of an Angel of God*, or of one received *as Chriſt Jeſus*, to *become their Enemy*, and that *upon* the moſt unjuſtifiable account, *becauſe he told them the Truth*! But, where truth can make Enemies, errours may eaſily gain Friends. And ſo we find it was in the Apoſtolical Churches, even under the Conduct and Teaching of the Apoſtles. Gal. 4. 14. 16.

The *Coloſſians* were not yet ſo far gone but they were in ſuch danger, that the Apoſtle writes this Epiſtle with great concernment for them. He tells them *v.* 1. *he had*

Ch. 1. v. 7. 4, 12. a ſharp *Conflict* in his own mind about them. *They had not yet ſeen his Face in the Fleſh*, being converted by ſome ſent by him, of whom *Epaphras* is moſt taken notice of; but he was preſent *with them in Spirit*, *v.* 5. *i. e.* He was deeply affected with their Condition; for he underſtood the Deſigns and Artifices of the Seducers among them. He knew what fair and plauſible pretences they had; *viz.* that they went about not to undermine Chriſtianity, but to advance it, by taking in ſome Jewiſh Cuſtoms, and ſome Gentile Obſervances, and Modes of Worſhip which might eaſily be Accommodated to the Chriſtian Doctrine; and ſo a great deal of the Animoſities both of the *Jews* and Heathens would be removed; and Chriſtianity would thereby gain more Friends, and meet with fewer Enemies.

The Apoſtle finding how neceſſary it was at this time, if poſſible, to keep them *Stedfaſt in the Faith*,

1. He aſſures them, that the Chriſtian Doctrine was of it ſelf ſo ſufficient for the good of Mankind, that it needed no Additions, either from the Law of *Moſes*, or the Philoſophy of the *Gentiles*, which might introduce ſeveral things, with a ſpecious Appearance of *Wiſdom*, *Humility* and *Mortification*; but they ought to be aſſured, that from Chriſt they had all that was neceſſary or uſeful
v. 3. for Salvation; *For in him are hid all the Treaſures of Wiſdom and Knowledge.*

2. That this Doctrine was at firſt truly delivered to them, and they ought to be ſtedfaſt in it; which is the deſign of the Text.

But they might object, that *Epaphras* was no Apoſtle of Chriſt himſelf; and if he were, yet there were many Apoſtles, and the falſe Apoſtles pretended to be true ones; and although St. *Paul* interpoſed his Authority; yet he was but one, and the *Judaizers* would not yield to it,

it, but were ready to ſuggeſt, that the other Apoſtles were more favourable to the Jewiſh Cuſtoms than he; and therefore it was neceſſary ſome more general and common Rule be found out, whereby to diſtinguiſh the Original and Genuine Doctrine of Chriſt from that of Pretenders and Seducers.

The clearing of this is in it ſelf a matter of great conſequence; and not only was to thoſe of that Age, but is ſo in every Age of the Chriſtian Church, where the ſame Queſtion may be put: What was the true Primitive Doctrine of Chriſt; and by what means may we come to it? which concerns us at this day as well as them.

And the Anſwer lay in two particulars, which I ſhall endeavour to clear.

1. That which the Apoſtles did in common deliver to the Churches planted by them, was the Genuine Doctrine of Chriſt.

2. That which they have left in their Writings, after it came to be conteſted which was the true Doctrine of Chriſt.

1. That which the Apoſtles did in common deliver to the Churches planted by them. For, we have all the reaſon in the World to believe, that the Apoſtles delivered one and the ſame Faith to all the Churches; having the ſame Infallible Spirit to direct them. There was no need for them *to meet together before their diſperſion, and to agree upon ſome common Articles of Faith*, as *Ruffinus* imagins, *leſt they ſhould differ from each other*; For how could they differ, who had the ſame *Spirit of Truth to lead them into all Truth?* And we find nothing like a Combination among the *Apoſtles*, as to matters of Doctrine: And if there had been, it would have rendred the Faith they delivered more ſuſpitious, in that they durſt not truſt particular Perſons with delivery of it, without an antecedent Confederacy among themſelves, which would have

Ruffin. in Symbol.

Joh. 16. 13.

looked like a miſtruſt of that *Promiſe* of the *Spirits* being fulfilled, upon all of them. And we find, when the *Goſpels* were to be written, there was no ſuch meeting together, to ſettle the ſeveral parts of it; and yet this was of as much conſequence to the Church of God; but St. *Matthew* writes his *Goſpel* in *Judea*, at the time, ſaith *Irenæus*, *that* Peter *and* Paul *preached and founded a Church in* Rome, St. *Mark* either at *Rome* or in *Egypt*, *not till after their deceaſe*, ſaith the ſame very Antient Father. St. *Luke* in *Greece*, after St. *Paul* planted Churches in *Rome*, and St. *John* in *Aſia*, after all the reſt. But there was the ſame Divine Spirit, which aſſiſted them all, and therefore there was ſuch a concurrence as ſhewed their veracity, but ſuch a variety as ſhewed there was no Combination.

Iren. l. 3. c. 1.

Euſeb. l. 5. c. 18.

But it is obſervable, that none of the *Goſpels* were written till the Doctrine of Chriſt had been preached by the Apoſtles in many places, and many Churches were formed and eſtabliſhed by them. And there were two great Advantages thereby.

1. The Unity of the Faith delivered by the Apoſtles was the more ſeen; becauſe then without the help of a written Rule, they ſo unanimouſly agreed in the Doctrines they delivered. Not, as though it were leſs poſſible to miſtake without it; but on the contrary, there being a much greater liableneſs to miſtake, ſo univerſal a conſent, was the ſtronger Argument of a Divine Aſſiſtance. If there had been any difference in the Doctrines preached by the Apoſtles, there were ſo many Enemies both of *Jews* and Infidels, and falſe Apoſtles, who would preſently have reproached the Chriſtian Churches with it. But no diſagreement is ever ſo much as mention'd, as to what the *Apoſtles* themſelves taught; *They had one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm, one God and Father of all.* Where-ever the Apoſtles went, whether into *Scythia*,

Eph. 4. 4, 5, 6.

Scythia, *Parthia*, *Meſopotamia*, or any Provinces of the *Roman* Empire, all who were converted by them were Baptized into the ſame Faith, which St. *Jude calls the Faith once delivered to the Saints.* But *once delivered* tho by many Perſons, and in very diſtant places; and ſo *once delivered*, as the ſame Faith once delivered is to continue to the Worlds end. For nothing can be made the Faith of Chriſt, which was not always ſo; for that were to lay a *new foundation*, and to make another Covenant than what Chriſt hath ſealed with his Blood. *But he is the ſame yeſterday, to day, and for ever.* The Terms of Salvation can never be altered, unleſs there be a new Saviour, and new Apoſtles, and new Teachers. But if we go to Heaven by Chriſt, we muſt go that way that himſelf hath directed. For Men and Angels joining their powers together cannot ſave one Soul; Chriſt alone *being the Way, the Truth and the Life; and none can come to the Father but by him.* This the Apoſtles very well knew, and were therefore careful to deliver nothing to the Church but what they received from Chriſt, as St. *Paul* ſaith of himſelf, *For I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you.* Not by way of Tradition from Men, but by immediate Divine Revelation; for as he ſaith, *he was not an Apoſtle of Men, or by Men, but by Jeſus Chriſt, and God the Father*; and not long after he ſaith, *he neither received the Goſpel of Man, neither was I taught it but by Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt.*

Jude v. 3.

Heb. 13. 8.

John 14. 6.

1 Cor. 11.

Gal. 1. 1. 12.

There was none of all the firſt Preachers of the Goſpel ſo liable to the Suſpicion of ſetting up for himſelf, and varying from the reſt as St. *Paul* was. For he was none of the Original Number of Apoſtles, and he was a known Perſecutor of the Diſciples of Chriſt, and ſudden Converts are always ſuſpected; and *Ananias* had a viſion to ſatisfy him, and yet he could not tell what to think at firſt concerning

cerning him; and *the Diſciples* when they firſt heard him
Acts 9.13. *were amazed*; after this, he took a courſe by himſelf,
21. and did not go up to *Jeruſalem* to the College of *Apo-*
Gal. 1.17. *ſtles* there reſident, but went into *Arabia*; ſo that, if any one might be thought to ſet up another Doctrine, it was he; but he was ſo far from it, that he eſtabliſhed and confirmed the truth of what they delivered, and was very ſucceſsful in his Apoſtleſhip in all places. And when there had been ſome whiſpers concerning him, as though he proceeded not in the ſame way with the reſt, he went up to *Jeruſalem*, and there upon full examination, James
2. 9. *and* Cephas *and* John, *who were the leading Apoſtles, gave him the right hand of Fellowſhip*; in token of their full conſent in the ſame Faith.

2. The truth of the Goſpel was the more plainly diſcovered.

All this while, the *Apoſtles* only preached and delivered their Doctrine to the ſeveral Churches by verbal Inſtructions; but after theſe had been received in the hearts of ſuch multitudes, that there could be no ſuſpition that a falſe Repreſentation of Chriſts Doctrine or Actions could be received by thoſe Churches, then the Wiſe Providence of God took care for Poſterity, and imploy'd ſeveral Perſons in diſtant Places and Times to write the Hiſtory of our Saviour. And there was this advantage to the Church that the *Goſpels* were written no ſooner. For all the Churches planted by the Apoſtles, were then made Judges whether the Goſpels written were agreeable to the Doctrine which the Apoſtles had taught; and if not, there would have been juſt reaſon to have queſtion'd either the Truth of what had been taught them, or what was delivered in the Goſpels.

But when they found the main to be fully conſonant to what they had been taught, the Teſtimony of every one

one of these Churches did shew the concurrence of all the Apostles, as to the Doctrine contained in the several Gospels.

And that which adds to the strength of this proof is, that when the true Gospels were written, there were several false and counterfeit *Gospels* dispersed abroad, under the Names of the Apostles themselves. As of St. *Peter*, St. *Thomas*, St. *Matthias*, and others; as *Eusebius* informs us; and as we have the genuine *Acts of the Apostles*, so there were the pretended *Acts of* Paul, *of* Andrew *and* John, and the other Apostles. How came these to be rejected, and the other to be carefully received? Here lies the true Advantage of *Original Tradition* before the *written Gospels*, that by it the several Churches were enabled to pass a true judgment concerning them when they came to be dispersed among them. For they could presently tell, whether what they read were agreeable to what they had heard and received from the *Apostles*. As suppose the Gospel of St. *Matthew* being published in *Judea*, were carried into *Mesopotamia* or *Persia*, where many Christian Churches were very early planted; these being throughly instructed by the *Apostles* in all things relating to the Life, Death, Resurrection and Doctrine of Christ, could presently judge whether St. *Matthews* Gospel agreed with what they had heard or not, and the like holds as to all the Churches in the *Roman* Empire. So that the Consent of the Churches so soon, while the memory of the Apostles Doctrine was so fresh in their minds, is in effect the consent of *all the Apostles* who taught them. *Euseb. Hist. l. 3. 25.*

And this is very different from the case of particular Persons in some Churches, who might mistake or forget what was taught; for this is a concurrent testimony of all the Apostolical Churches, who could not agree to approve

prove an error in the Goſpels contrary to the Faith delivered to them. And that while ſome of the Apoſtles were ſtill living. For the other Goſpels were received and approved, before St. *John* wrote his.

The caſe had been far otherwiſe, if no *Goſpels* had been written in that Age; for then it might have been ſuſpected, that either the Impreſſions of the firſt Teachers were worn out, or they had been by degrees alter'd from their firſt Apprehenſions by the cunning craftineſs of thoſe who lay in wait to deceive them.

After the deceaſe of the Apoſtles, the common Tradition of the *Apoſtolical Churches* was uſeful in theſe caſes;

1. To convey down the Authentick Writings of the Apoſtles or Evangeliſts, which were delivered to any of them.

2. To bear Teſtimony againſt any pretended Writings, which were not firſt received by the *Apoſtolical Churches* to which they were ſaid to be written. For there can be no Negative Teſtimony of more force than that; it being improbable to the utmoſt degree that ſuch a Church ſhould not know, or not make known any true *Apoſtolical Writings*.

3. To overthrow any pretence to a ſecret Tradition from the *Apoſtles* different from what was ſeen in the *Apoſtolical Writings*. And to this purpoſe *Irenæus* and *Tertullian* make very good uſe of the *Tradition* of the *Apoſtolical Churches* againſt the pretenders to ſuch a *Tradition*, which thoſe Churches were not acquainted with.

Iren. l. 3. c. 3. 4. Tertul. de Præſcript. Hær.

But they agree that the Apoſtles committed *the ſame Doctrine to Writing which they preached, and that it might be a Foundation and Pillar of Faith*; that this Doctrine was contained in the *four Goſpels*; and that the Apoſtolical Churches did receive them from thoſe who firſt wrote

wrote them, and that within the compaſs of the Apoſtolical Age.

It was therefore moſt agreeable to the infinite Wiſdom of God in providing for a conſtant Eſtabliſhment of the Faith of his Church in all Ages, neither to permit the Goſpels to be written till the Churches were planted, nor to be put off to another Generation. For, then it would have been plauſibly objected; if theſe things are true, why were they not recorded, when there were "Perſons living who were beſt able to have either proved, "or confuted them? Then we might have been ſatisfyed "one way or other; but now the *Jews* are dead, and "the Apoſtles are dead; and although there are many "left who believe their Doctrine, yet this can never "reach to the Teſtimony of thoſe who ſaw and heard "the things themſelves, or whoſe Doctrine was atteſted "by thoſe who did ſo. And this is now the mighty Advantage of the Church ever ſince that the things concerning Chriſt were written by ſuch Perſons. With what another kind of Authority do thoſe words command our Aſſent, *That which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life; For the life was manifeſted, and we have ſeen it, and bear witneſs, and ſhew unto you that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifeſt unto us, that which we have ſeen and heard declare we unto you*; then if all the Teſtimony concerning Chriſt were to be reſolved into thoſe who heard ſome ſay, that others told them, they had it from ſuch, who ſaw thoſe who converſed with them who ſaw Chriſt in the fleſh? At ſuch a diſtance the Authority of a Teſtimony is extremely leſſen'd; which is not like a River which grows greater by running;

1 John 1, 2, 3.

ning; but like a Mineral Water which loſes its ſtrength by being carried too far. We find in the time of *Papias* who lived but in the ſecond Century, the Authority of bare Tradition was mightily ſunk; For, *Euſebius* ſaith, *he converſed with the Diſciples of our Lord and his Apoſtles*, he ſaith of himſelf, *that he went up and down to them to get what he could from them, having a greater eſteem of what he could learn from them than of what was written.* And what Advantage did this bring to the Church? *It brought ſome idle opinions into reputation*, ſaith *Euſebius*; for afterwards they thought it enough to fix them upon *Papias*. But how was it poſſible for him to miſtake? *Euſebius* ſaith, *that being a Man of mean capacity, he might eaſily miſunderſtand the meaning of what was ſpoken.* But if Tradition might fail after ſuch a manner ſo near the Apoſtles times; then we muſt be aſſured of the *Capacity* as well as *Integrity* of thoſe of every Age through whom a Tradition paſſed, or elſe they might deceive, or be deceived about it.

Euſeb. Hiſt. l. 3. c. 39.

But God was pleaſed to provide better for the ſecurity of our Faith, by cauſing the Goſpels to be written either by the Apoſtles themſelves, as St. *Matthew* and St. *John*, or by the Diſciples of the chief Apoſtles, while the others were ſurviving, as St. *Mark* and St. *Luke*; and the latter gives this account of his undertaking to write it, viz. *That thou mighteſt know the certainty of thoſe things wherein thou haſt been inſtructed.* His Inſtruction was by an Oral Tradition; but that it ſeems wanted ſomething to ſtrengthen and confirm it; and that was by St. *Luke*'s writing his Goſpel. How could they add any aſſurance to him, if all the ground of his certainty were to be taken from Tradition? St. *Luke* thought it neceſſary then, that thoſe things which concerned the Life and Doctrine of Chriſt ſhould be put into Writing, that they might be

Luke 1. 4.

be more certainly convey'd; and that while they had the Teſtimony of thoſe, *who were eye-witneſſes and Miniſters of the Word.*

2. And ſo I come to the ſecond Rule of diſcerning the Primitive Doctrine of Chriſt; *viz.* The Writings of the Apoſtles, when matters of Doctrine came to be conteſted, where the Infallible Rule, whereby they were to judge, which was the true and genuine Doctrine of Chriſt.

There are ſome who pretend, that the Apoſtles Writings were meerly *Accidental and Occaſional* things, but that the main deſign was to lodge the great Aſſurance of the Doctrine of Chriſt in *Tradition* from one to another; and what they wrote was not to make any *Rule of Faith*, but only to give ſome good Advice to thoſe Churches they wrote to.

But I ſhall now prove that the Writings of the *Apoſtles* were intended by the Holy Ghoſt to be a *ſtanding Rule*, whereby the Church was to judge which was the true and genuine Doctrine of Chriſt.

1. From the Reaſons and Occaſions of writing the *Books* of the *New Teſtament*:

1. As to the *Goſpels*, we muſt diſtinguiſh the *General Reaſon* of writing them, from the *particular Occaſions* as to the ſeveral Goſpels. The *General Reaſon* is to be drawn from the Divine Wiſdom which inſpired and guided them; the particular *Occaſions* relate to the circumſtances of writing them.

Iren. l 3. c. 1. The *General Reaſon* is that which *Irenæus* gives, *viz. That the Goſpel which they had firſt preached, was by the Will of God put into Writing, that it might be a Foundation and Pillar of our Faith.* Not meerly *to keep up the Remembrance of it*, which *Fevardentius* yields, and thereby overthrows the Infallibility of *Oral Tradition*; but that ſo it may be a certain Rule of Faith to all Ages. The *Evangeliſts* ſaith St. *Auguſtin*, *were but Chriſts Hands, which himſelf as the Head, directed in writing the Goſpels, and therefore we are to look on the Goſpels as his own Hand-writing. The Holy Ghoſt*, ſaith he, *directed the Minds of the Evangeliſts, as to the order and manner of their Writing.* Which varied according to the particular Occaſions, but yet were all ſubſervient to the General Reaſon.

Aug. de Conſenſ. Evang. l. 1. c. 54.

l. 2. c. 53.

Euſeb. Hiſt. l. 3. c. 24. St. *Matthew wrote the firſt Goſpel*, ſaith *Euſebius*, *to the* Jews *to whom he had preached, becauſe going into other parts he would ſupply the want of his Preſence among them by his Writing.* What need this, if Tradition were a certain and infallible way of conveying the Doctrine of Chriſt? *Chryſ. Hom. 1 in Matth.* St. *Chryſoſtom* ſaith, *the* Jewiſh *Chriſtians deſired him to put into Writing what they had heard him Preach.* Did not they underſtand the force of Tradition better? Or why ſhould St. *Matthew* put them out of an Infallible Way? The Authority of the Imperfect Work on St. *Matthew* ſaith, *they deſired him to write his Goſpel, that where ever they went they might carry an Account of their Faith with them.* *Clemens Alexandrinus*, ſaith, *the occaſion of writing St.* Marks *Goſpel was, that the people were not ſatisfied with an unwritten delivery of the Holy Doctrine, and therefore importuned* Mark, *who was the Diſciple of St.* Peter, *that he would leave a Monument of his Doctrine in Writing*; *which St.* Peter *underſtanding by Revelation, approved and confirmed his Goſpel for the uſe of the Churches.* *Origen* ſaith, *he*

Opus Imperfect. in Mat. in Prologo.

Euſeb. l. 2. c. 15.

wrote

wrote it according to St. Peters *directions. Epiphanius* ſaith, *by his Authority, Athanaſius* ſaith, *it was dictated by him at* Rome. *Euſeb. l. 6. c. 25. Epiphan. Hær. 51. Athanaſ. in Synopſi.*

It ſeems that *Peter* himſelf did not think fit to leave the Doctrine of Chriſt to an *Oral Tradition*, even at *Rome*, but *Irenæus* thinks it was written after St. *Peters* deceaſe, who therein differs from the reſt, and ſhews how uncertain meer Tradition is. *Tertullian* ſaith, *St.* Marks *Goſpel was attributed to St.* Peter, *and St.* Lukes *to St.* Paul. St. *Jerom* mentions the Opinion of ſome, that when St. *Paul* ſaith *according to my Goſpel*, he means that of St. *Luke*. p. 155. *Tertul. c. Marc. l. 4. c. 5. Hieron. de Script. Eccleſ.*

But St. *Luke* himſelf plainly gives an Account of the occaſion of his Writing. St. *Ambroſe* thinks by thoſe *who had taken in hand to write of thoſe things which were firmly believed among us*, he means the *Authors of the counterfeit Goſpels, as that of the Twelve Apoſtles and St.* Matthias. But we have no evidence that theſe were older than St. *Luke*; his meaning is, that in thoſe parts where he was, there were ſome who did undertake to give an Account of the Life and Actions of Chriſt, who wanted the Advantages which he had; having had great opportunities of knowing circumſtances from *the Eye-witneſſes*; and therefore he ſet himſelf to give an exact Relation of them, that not only *Theophilus*, but every one that anſwers his name *might know the certainty of thoſe things wherein they had been inſtructed.* But, did not they know the certainty of theſe things by the Apoſtles Preaching? Yes, but the things they heard might ſlip out of their Memories; and to prevent this, ſaith *Theophylact*, *St.* Luke *wrote his Goſpel, that they might retain theſe things with greater certainty.* And words that are only ſpoken are more eaſily miſunderſtood; *Ambroſ. in Luc.* Luke 1. 1. *Epiph. Hær.* 51. *Theophyl. in Luc.*

Maldonat. Com. in Evang. prol. misunderstood; which *Maldonat* assigns, as one great Reason of the Evangelists writing their several Gospels.

St. *John* likewise gives an account himself of the Reason of his Writing; and that the greatest imaginable.

Joh. 20. 31. *But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his Name.* Why *written that ye might believe?* Did the Apostle in his old Age mistrust the understandings or the Memories of Christians? Was not the Apostles Teaching sufficient to keep up the Principles of the Christian Faith in the hearts of the people; no, not while St. *John* himself was yet living? He had certainly a very mean Opinion of Tradition, that thought it necessary for him to write that they might believe that *Jesus is the Son of God.* For there was no point of Faith more necessary than this, which was required of all Persons to be owned before Baptism.

Yet for all this, and whatever else can be said, St. *John* thought it necessary *that these things be written that they might believe.*

He lived the longest of any of the Apostles, and therefore saw how little Tradition was to be trusted; for it was already corrupted in so weighty a point as the Divinity of Christ.

Cerinthus and his Followers allow'd the general Tradition of the Church, that *Jesus was the Son of God*; but then they gave their own sense of it, by extraordinary Favour and Adoption. And from hence the Fathers agree that St. *John* took occasion to write his Divine Gospel, to clear this Fundamental point of the Christian Faith.

Hieron. Prom. in Matth. De Script. Eccles.

And

And withal obſerving that the other Evangeliſts inſiſted chiefly on the Actions of Chriſt for one year, *viz. after* Johns *Impriſonment* he reſumes the whole matter and adds thoſe things which were omitted by the Reſt; that ſo the Church might be furniſhed with a full Relation of all that was neceſſary to compleat and eſtabliſh the Faith of Chriſtians. *Epiph. Hær.* 51. *Chryſ. hom.* 1. *in Matth.* *Euſeb. l.* 3. *c.* 24.

2. As to the *Epiſtles.*

The firſt *Epiſtle* we read of in the Chriſtian Church, (and in probability the firſt writing in the New Teſtament) was the *Decretal Epiſtle* of the *Council* of *Jeruſalem.* Act. 1523.

What ſhould make the Apoſtles put theſe Decrees into Writing? They were very ſhort, and concerned the practices of Men, and withal were ſent by *Barnabas* and *Paul*, and *Judas*, and *Silas.* Were not theſe ſufficient to deliver the Apoſtles ſenſe to the Churches, without Letters from them? What a pitiful thing did they take Oral Tradition to be, if they thought ſuch Men could not by it give full ſatisfaction to the Churches of *Syria* and *Cilicia*, unleſs they ſent it under their hands?

The *Epiſtle* to the *Romans* was written by St. *Paul* on purpoſe to clear ſome main points of the Chriſtian Doctrine, which were then warmly diſputed between the Jews and the Chriſtians, and between the Judaizing Chriſtians and others, as about *Juſtification*, *Rejection of the Jews*, the *difference* of *Meats*, &c. And St. *Paul* took very needleſs pains in writing that excellent Epiſtle, if he knew of Chriſts appointing a *Judge of Controverſies* here; or if he thought Writing were not a certain way to make

make a Rule of Faith, whereby they were to judge in those matters.

The first *Epistle* to the *Corinthians* was written not meerly to reprove their Factions and Disorders, but to direct them, and to establish and prove the Faith of the *Resurrection*, which was then contested among them. The *Epistle* was sent by *Stephanus* and *Fortunatus*, who could have carried the Apostles sense without his Writing; but there are many weighty things, besides the particular occasions which are of lasting concernment to the Church in all Ages; as there are likewise in his second Epistle to them.

1 Cor. 15. 12.

The *Epistle* to the *Galatians* was written on occasion of one of the greatest points of controversy at that time, *viz.* the Use and Obligation of the Law of *Moses*. And St. *Paul* found by sad experience among them, that it was very possible for those who had the best Instructions, either to forget them, or to grow out of Love with them, and to be fond of a change: else he would never have said, *O foolish* Galatians, *who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the Truth?* And *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the Grace of Christ into another Gospel.* How! was it indeed possible for them to be *removed*, and to be so soon *removed*, who had received the Faith by the Delivery of St. *Paul* himself? Then, for all that I can see, human Nature taken with all its Advantages and Motives, and Evidences, is a very fallible thing; and if then it might be deceived, and that so easily and grosly; then much more in any following Age of the Church; unless human Nature be mightily changed for the better, since the Apostles times; or any Teachers since be more effectual, than the Apostles, and especially than *St.* Paul, *who laboured more abundantly than they all.*

Gal. 3. 1. 1. 6.

1 Cor. 15. 10.

The

The *Epiſtle* to the *Epheſians*, though written upon a general Argument, yet doth ſuppoſe that they were in continual danger of being deceived; *and toſſed up and down, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine by the ſleight of Men, and cunning craftineſs whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* Eph. 4. 14.

And therefore he adviſes them to be upon their guard, and to have their Armour about them, and one choice part of it, *is the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.* 6. 17.

The *Philippians* were aſſaulted by a rude, violent, head-ſtrong Faction of Judaizers; which the Apoſtle bids them to beware of; and writes his Epiſtle to them for that purpoſe, and he exhorts them *to ſtand faſt in one Spirit, with one mind ſtriving together for the Faith of the Goſpel.* Phil. 3. 2. 1. 27.

In the ſecond Epiſtle to the *Theſſalonians*, and in both Epiſtles to *Timothy*, he gives notice of a great Defection from the Chriſtian Faith; he deſcribes the manner of it, *that it ſhall be with ſigns and lying words, and with all deceiveableneſs of unrighteouſneſs in them that periſh, becauſe they received not the love of the truth; that they ſhall ſpeak lies in hypocriſie, and forbid to marry, and command to abſtain from meats, being evil men, having a form of godlineſs, and denying the power of it.* I meddle not now with the time when this Apoſtacy began; but from hence, it is evident that St. *Paul* ſuppoſed, that thoſe who at firſt received the Chriſtian Faith by Tradition from the Apoſtles themſelves, might notwithſtanding through their own weakneſs and folly, and the Artifices of Deceivers be drawn from it; and that to prevent ſuch miſchievous conſequences, he knew no better means than a Written Rule, which he tells *Timothy was able to make him wiſe to Salvation; and to make the Man of God perfect, throughly furniſhed to every good Work.* 2 Theſſ. 2. 8. 10. 1 Tim. 4. 2, 3. 2 Tim. 3. 1, 5. 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

And to name no more, the *Coloſſians* were ſet upon by ſome who thought to refine Chriſtianity; or at leaſt to make it more paſſable in the World, and therefore would have introduced into it ſome Rites of the Jews, ſome Auſterities of the Gentiles, ſome ways of Worſhip which would recommend them to their Adverſaries; and upon this occaſion he writes this Epiſtle to them to convince them that Chriſtianity alone was far beyond any mixtures of the Fancies or Traditions of men, and therefore he could give them no better Advice, than as they had firſt received the Doctrine of Chriſt to continue in it, or in the words of the Text, *As they had received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord ſo to walk in him.*

The deſign of what I have ſaid is, that although the *Goſpels* and *Epiſtles* were written upon particular *occaſions*; yet thoſe *occaſions* were ſo great and conſiderable; and the Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt did ſo direct the Hands and Pens of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles in writing them, that what they have therein delivered contains a compleat Rule of the true and genuine Faith, as it was at firſt delivered to the Church.

But againſt this, it is objected, *that St.* Paul *himſelf* 2 Theſſ. 2. 15. *charged the* Theſſalonians *to ſtand faſt and hold the Traditions which they have been taught either by word or by his Epiſtles. From whence it appears, that there were other Traditions to be held, that were not written.*

The force of all this will be taken away, if we conſider when that Epiſtle was written; *viz.* one of the firſt which St. *Paul* wrote, and ſoon after the former Epiſtle to the *Theſſalonians*; which was ſome time before St. *Lukes* Goſpel, which was firſt received in the Churches of *Greece* planted by St. *Paul.* Therefore all the proper Doctrine of Chriſt himſelf, and all that relates to his Life and Actions were then but Traditions among them; and

and therefore St. *Paul* had great Reaſon then to require them *to ſtand faſt to the Traditions they had been taught: i. e.* to the Doctrine of Chriſt they had received in that manner.

But it is urged, *that he mentions before, ſomething he had ſaid about Antichriſts coming when he was with them,* v. 5. *Bell. de verbo. l. 4. c. 5.*

If this be allow'd, it will be more againſt than for *Tradition.* For, what is become of that *Tradition*? If it be loſt, then it follows that *Tradition* is no *Infallible Way* of conveyence; and therefore we have more Reaſon to adhere to a written word.

2. Which leads us to the ſecond Reaſon from which I deſigned to prove, that there ought to be a written Rule for diſcerning true primitive Chriſtianity; and that is from *the notorious uncertainty of meer Tradition.* I ſay, *notorious,* becauſe there never was any Tryal made of it, but it failed, even when it had the greateſt Advantages.

I might inſiſt upon the *Tradition* of the firſt Ages of the World; when mens Lives were ſo long, and the principles of the Natural Religion ſo few; and yet both before and after the Flood, mankind was ſtrangely degenerated from them.

I might inſiſt on many inſtances in the firſt Ages of the Chriſtian Church; ſo many, that ſcarce one can be produced wherein they pleaded meer Tradition, but they were miſtaken in it; As about the *Millennium,* the *Age of Chriſt,* the *time of* Eaſter (on one ſide or other) the *Communicating Infants.* For St. *Auguſtin* quotes *Apoſtolical Tradition* for it. *Aug de Pecat. Meritis. l. 1. c. 4.*

But I ſhall wave all theſe, and only mention a very neceſſary and important thing, which was a long time truſted to *Tradition,* and yet they differ'd ſo much about

it, as evidently proved, that meer Tradition was no Infallible Means of conveyance. And that is about the *Apoſtles Creed* which was to be repeated by all that were to be Baptized.

We have many plain Teſtimonies to prove, that this was not to be written; but to be conveyed from one to another, by an *Oral Tradition*; (*a*) St. *Hierom*, (*b*) St. *Auguſtin*, (*c*) *Ruffinus* all affirm it.

(a) *In Symbolo Fidei & Spei noſtræ, quod ad Apoſtolis traditum, non ſcribitur in Charta & Atramento, ſed in tabulis cordis carnalibus.* Hieron. ad Pammachi: adverſ. Errores Joh. Hieroſol.

(b) *Nec ut eadem verba Symboli teneatis, ullo modo debetis ſcribere, ſed audienda perdiſcere; nec cum didiceritis ſcribere, ſed memoriâ ſimper tenere & recolere.* Auguſt. de Diverſis Serm. 75.

(c) *Idcirco denique hæc non ſcribi Chartulis & membranis, ſed requiri credentium cordibus tradiderunt, ut certum eſſet hæc neminem ex lectione, quæ interdum pervenire etiam ad infideles ſolet, ſed ex Apoſtolorum traditione didiciſſe.* Ruffinus in Symbol.

(*d*) *Tertul. de Præſcrip. c.* 12, 13, 14, 21. *De Virgin. Vel. c.* 1. *Adverſ. Praxeam. c.* 2. *Auguſt. Serm.* 59. 186. 213. 215. *Retract. l.* 2. *c.* 3. *Enchirid. de Fide, n.* 15. *De Symbol. ad Catech. Ruffin. in Præm.* (*c*) *Theod. l.* 5. *c.* 9. (*d*) *Cyrill. Catech.* 11. (*e*) *Theodo. l.* 1. *c.* 12. (*f*) *Caſſian de Incarn. l.* 6. *c.* 3, 4.

And the *Creed* was commonly then called (*d*) *the Rule of Faith*; which ſhewed that they looked on all the Articles therein contained, as the ſtandard of neceſſary points.

And yet there is a plain and conſiderable difference in the Antient Creeds; ſome Articles being in ſome which were not in others; although we have Reaſon to believe the neceſſary points were at firſt the ſame in all. Or elſe the ſeveral Churches muſt have different Rules of Faith.

The Church of *Jeruſalem* was called (*c*) *the Mother of all Churches* by the General Council of *Conſtantinople*; and in the Creed there delivered to the *Catechumens*. (*d*) St. *Cyril* mentions the *Eternal Generation of the Son before all Worlds*; and ſo doth (*e*) *Euſebius* at *Cæſarea* in the Creed, which he ſaith, *he learnt at his Baptiſm*, which was long before *the Nicene Creed*. (*f*) *Caſſian* makes it a part of that Creed which the Apoſtles delivered to the Church, and was particularly received in the Church of *Antioch*.

But no ſuch thing was delivered in the *Weſtern Creeds*

as

as far as now appears, by what St. *Auguſtin*, *Ruffinus*, and others ſay in their expoſitions of it.

St. *Jerom* writing againſt the Biſhop of *Jeruſalem*, urges him with the *Creed*,(g) (no doubt that which was received in his own Church) and he ſaith, *it conſiſteth of three main points, the Confeſſion of the Trinity, the Unity of the Church, and the Reſurrection of the Fleſh.*

(g) *Hieron. ad Pammach*

And the Creed of the Church of *Aquileia* went no farther, ſaith (h) *Ruffinus*; nor ſome old Copies of the *Roman Creed.*

(h) *Ruffin in Symbol. p.* 191.

But *Marcellus* of *Ancyra* had *Eternal Life* in his (i) Creed, and ſo had (k) *Cyril* of *Jeruſalem*; ſo had the *African* Church in St. (l) *Auguſtins* time; ſo had the Church of *Ravena*; but not the Church of *Turin*; nor the *Gallican* Churches; if *Maximus Taurinenſis*, and *Venantius Fortunatus* explained all the Articles of their Creeds.

V. Uſſer. de Symb. p. 8, 9. (i) *Epiphan. Hæreſ.* 72. (k) *Cyrill. Catech.* 18. (l) *Auguſt. de Symb. l.* 1. *Petr. Chryſol. Serm.* 57, *&c.*

Ruffinus confeſſes the Article of *Deſcent into Hell* was not in the *Roman*, nor in any of the *Eaſtern Creeds.*

The Creeds of *Jeruſalem* and *Aquileia* had not *the Communion of Saints*; nor thoſe of *Marcellus* and (m) *Epiphanius.*

(m) *Epiph. Ancorat.*

The Title of *Catholick* was not added to the *Church* in the Creed in St. (n) *Auguſtins* time, for he makes it a *Periphraſis, utique Catholicam*, from whence probably it came to be added afterwards.

(n) *Auguſtin. de Fide & Symbolo. Et de Symbolo Serm.* 243.

Ruffinus takes no notice of it, and it was not extant in the old Copies of the *Roman* Creed; nor in that of *Marcellus Ancyranus.*

Theſe things I mention, not in the leaſt to ſhake the Faith of the Articles of the *Apoſtles Creed*, which (o) St. *Auguſtin* ſaith *was gathered out of Scriptures*, and is agreeable to them; but to ſhew what an uncertain way of conveyance meer Oral Tradition is, when a thing ſo eaſily remembred, ſo conſtantly uſed, of ſo much weight and conſequence

(o) *De Symbolo ad Catech. c.* 1.

conſequence fell into ſuch varieties in the greateſt Churches, while they were ſo ſcrupulous about the writing of it.

What cauſe have we then to be thankful to God, that hath taken ſo much care of his Church, as to provide us an Infallible Written Rule in the Holy Scriptures, whereby we certainly know, what the true Primitive Chriſtianity was, which was delivered by Chriſt and his Apoſtles?

But here is a great difficulty to be removed, as to the Written Word.

How can we be certain, we have it, if not by Tradition? and if Tradition be ſo uncertain, how can we be made certain by it, that we have that written Word which the Apoſtles delivered? For might not that fail in this, as well as the Creed? And then what ſecurity can we have for our Faith.

In Anſwer to this, I will ſhew,

1. What Advantage things that are written have, as to the certainty of conveyance above things meerly committed to Memory and Tradition.

2. What Advantage the Scriptures have, above any other things committed to Writing as to the certainty of their conveyance.

1. As to the Advantage things Written have above thoſe committed to Memory and Tradition only. Which will appear by theſe things,

1. It was the way God himſelf made choice of, where the Reaſon for Tradition was ſtronger; I mean as to the Ten Commandments, which were ſhort and plain, and eaſy to be remembred, and very agreeable to the Senſe and General Intereſt of Mankind; yet the Wiſe God who perfectly underſtood the Nature of Man, would not leave the Ten Commandmants to an Oral Tradition, but God delivered to *Moſes* Two Tables of Stone written with

with the Finger of God; and on them he wrote the Ten Commandments. What a vain and superfluous thing were this, if Oral and Practical Tradition were Infallible? But Gods own pitching upon this way, after so long a Tryal of Mankind in the other; is a Demonstration of the greater certainty of it, if we suppose that God aimed at the benefit of Mankind by it. Deut. 9. 10. 10. 4.

2. When Religion was corrupted among the Jews, the only way of restoring it was by a Written Book of the Law.

As we find in the case of *Josiahs* Reformation, which was made by the Book of the Law, which was found in the House of the Lord. 2 Kings 22. 8.

This was the Rule by which *Hilkiah* the High Priest, thought it necessary for *Josiah* to go by; and not by any Tradition left among them concerning the Law which God had given by *Moses*. 23. 2, 3.

3. This was that which our Saviour appealed to in all his Disputes; *search the Scriptures*, saith he to the *Jews*; not run to your Traditions, for those were then very corrupt, especially about the Messias, as that he was to be a Temporal Prince, *&c.* which was then a dangerous and fundamental mistake; and therefore Christ appeals from them to the Scriptures; *And they are they which testifie of me. Had ye believed* Moses, *ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me; but if ye believe not his Writings, how shall ye believe my words?* And our Saviour severely checks the *Pharisees* for regarding their own Traditions more than the Written Law. And yet they pretended to an Oral Tradition down from *Moses*; as the Jews do to this day; and none are wore grosly deceived than they. John 5. 39. 46. 47. Matth. 15. 3. 9.

4. The general Sense and Experience of Mankind agrees herein, that all matters of consequence are more certainly preserved by Writings than by meer words. There is

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no Invention hath been more valued by the Wiſer part of Mankind than that of *Letters*; becauſe it is of ſuch excellent uſe for conveying the ſenſe of our minds at a diſtance to others. All men have ſo great a miſtruſt, either of the capacity or memory, or fidelity of others; that what they would have done with ſecurity they commit to Writing. And whatever we truly underſtand of the Ages before us, we are beholden to Writing for it; all thoſe memorable Actions, and Inſtitutions, either of *Philoſophy* or *Religion* which were not written, are long ſince buried in Oblivion, without poſſibility of a Reſurrection.

But where they have been committed to Writing they are preſerved after ſo many Ages; and by it we certainly know the Hiſtory of the *Patriarchs*, and the ſtrange Revolutions that happened from the beginning of the World. By it, we converſe with the Wiſeſt perſons of former times, and were able to juſtifie the Scriptures by the concurrent Teſtimonies of other Writers. By it, we are enabled to interpret Prophecies, and to make plain their accompliſhments, which without it, we could never make out. Yea by it, the Wiſdom of thoſe is preſerved for the benefit of mankind, who thought fit to write nothing themſelves, as *Socrates* and *Pythagoras*, but their Diſciples took care in time to Write their Doctrines. So that we have the general Conſent of the wiſeſt part of mankind, that writing is a far more certain way of conveyance than meer Tradition.

2. And eſpecially in our caſe where there are ſo many particular advantages, as to the *Holy Scriptures*, above any other Writings.

1. From the ſpecial Providence of God, with reſpect to them; for ſince it is agreed by all Chriſtians, that theſe were written by Divine Inſpiration, it is moſt reaſonable

ſonable to believe, that a more than ordinary care would be taken to preſerve them.

And therefore to ſuppoſe any Books of Scripture to be loſt, which contained any neceſſary points of Faith is a great Reflexion on Divine Providence. For, if God watches over his Church, he cannot be ſuppoſed to let ſuch Books be loſt which were deſigned for the univerſal and laſting Benefit of his Church.

2. From the mighty eſteem which the Church of God had always for them; for, they built their Hopes of Heaven upon the promiſes contained in them. The Book of Scripture was their Evidence for their future Inheritance; the Foundation of their Hope, and Rule of their Faith; their Defence againſt Aſſaults and Temptations; their Counſeller in caſes of Difficulty; their Support, under Troubles; and their ſure Guide to a happy Eternity; and therefore the Primitive Chriſtians choſe rather to endure any Torments than baſely to betray it, and give it up to their Enemies.

3. From the early diſputes that were about them. Which ſhews that they were no Invention of after times; nor were brought into the World by Stealth and Art; for, they endured the greateſt ſhock of Oppoſition at firſt, while the matters of Fact concerning them were the moſt eaſily proved. And having paſſed the ſevere Scrutiny of the firſt Ages, when ſo many counterfeit Writings were ſent abroad, the following Ages could have no Reaſon to call their Authority in queſtion.

4. From the general conſent of divided Churches about them. It might have pleaſed God to have kept his Church from thoſe unhappy Breaches which have been in all parts of the Chriſtian World; but the Eaſt, and the Weſt, the North and the South can all bear Teſtimony to the ſad Diviſions of Chriſtendom; and thoſe

of many Ages ſtanding. But yet, we have this conſiderable Advantage by them; that we can have no Reaſon to miſtruſt a conſpiracy where the ſeveral Bodies are ſo much divided.

5. From the great internal ſatisfaction which the minds of good Men have concerning them; and which no other writing can pretend to give. For here we read of the Promiſe of Divine Aſſiſtance to ſincere and humble minds. And that Aſſiſtance carries a *Lumen Fidei* into the mind; as *Aquinas* calls it 2. 2. *a* 3 *ad* 2. *and by that* he ſaith, *the mind is united to Truth, that its aſſent is only fixed upon it; and therefore there is no danger of Damnation to thoſe who are in Chriſt Jeſus, and are thus illuminated by Faith in him.* Not that this is an Argument to convince others, who have not that inward ſenſe which they have; but the ſame Holy Spirit which did at firſt indite them, may give ſuch an inward and effectual Teſtimony as to the Truth of the matter contained in them; that from thence they may firmly conclude theſe Books to contain the word of God. And that Aſſurance which the minds of good Men have from the Influence of Divine Grace, may be more effectual and powerful in them, than all the pretended Infallibility or Demonſtration in the World. It is certain thoſe cannot be deceived whom the Holy Spirit teacheth; and the beſt and wiſeſt of the Antient Schoolmen did make the great firmneſs and certainty of Faith not to depend on outward Motives, but on inward Grace; which ſo inlightned the Mind, and fixed the Inclinations of the Soul, that nothing is able to remove it. This ſort of Faith is no blind Aſſent; but after all the Evidence which it hath to make its Aſſent Reaſonable; it takes ſo faſt a hold of Divine Truths by diſcerning the excellency and value of them, that he that hath it is willing to let go any thing rather than that; and although the

the Apprehenſion of Faith be not ſo clear as that of Science; yet the *Hypoſtaſis*, as the Apoſtle calls it, may be ſo firm, that no Temptations may be able to ſhake it. And he that can die for his Religion hath a ſtronger and better Faith, than he that thinks himſelf never ſo Infallible in the Grounds of it. That is a true Divine Faith which *purifies the Heart*, and thereby enlightens the mind; which *works by Love*, and not by cavilling and wrangling about the Grounds of it; *which overcomes the World*, and not that which is overcome by the Temptations of it. And ſuch a Faith, and only ſuch a one will carry us to Heaven; when, if it were poſſible for us to have the utmoſt Infallibility in the Act of believing; yet if it did not work effectually on our Hearts and Lives, we might go infallibly to Hell.

Heb. 11. 1. Act. 15. 9. Gal. 5. 6. 1 Joh. 5. 4.

And ſo I ſhall conclude this Diſcourſe with the ſecond ſenſe of the Obligation which lies on thoſe *who have received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord ſo to walk in him: i. e.* to improve their ſound Faith into the Practice of a good Life.

For alas! What advantage will it be to us, to have the moſt Primitive and Apoſtolical *Faith*, if our *Works* be not anſwerable to it? *Why call ye me Lord, Lord*, ſaith Chriſt, *and do not the things which I ſay?* Why do we pretend *to receive Chriſt Jeſus the Lord*, if we do not obſerve his Commands? *It is good*, ſaith S. *Paul, to be zealouſly affected always in a good thing.* And no doubt our *Faith* is ſuch; but then let us be *zealous of good Works too*, that we may ſhew our ſelves to be *that peculiar people who are redeemed by Jeſus Chriſt.* So that our Obligation ariſes every way from *Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, to walk in him*; if we conſider him as *our Lord*, ſo we are to obey him; if as *Chriſt Jeſus*, ſo he died for us *to redeem us from all iniquity.* We can have no pretence to live in our ſins, if we have received him who commands us to forſake them; for then

Luk. 6. 46. Gal. 4. 18. Tit. 2. 14.

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2 Tim. 2. 19. we receive and reject him at the same time. *Let every one that names the name of Christ, depart from iniquity*, saith St. *Paul*, what should those then do that profess *to receive him as their Lord*, who are thereby bound to yield obedience to his Laws? one of the great causes of the Degeneracy of the Heathen World was the separating *Religion* and *Morality*; when this was left to the Schools of Philosophers to instruct men in, whereas their Religion consisted only of some Solemn Rites and Sacrifices. Let us have a care of as dangerous a Separation between *Faith* and *Works*, or which is all one, between *receiving Christ, and doing his Will*. For those are the proper *Works* of the Gospel, wherein we own *Christ* as *our Lord*, and do them because he commands us. And the Apostle hath summ'd up the *whole Duty* of *Christians* in those

Tit. 2. 12. comprehensive words, *Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World*, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. To whom. &c.

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